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SOUTHWEST.

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GYNECOLOGIST TO ST. FRANCIS' HOSPITAL.



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So much has been said and written of Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and Southern California as places of residence for invalids, that it is not now a pleasant task to add to this too abundant literature; and if it were not for the fact that a visit to the chief points of resort in those States had shown me the fallacy of many of the opinions of my coworkers in the East, this paper would be unnecessary.

The opportunity to observe, compare, and examine into the respective merits of these localities from an impartial standpoint is not given to many active physicians, and the circumstances that have made it necessary for me to spend nearly a year among these resorts should be turned to account.

Too often the climatologist in writing of a certain place becomes an advocate and, perhaps unconsciously, paints a picture that patients find too highly colored, and reports go back to the medical adviser in the East that do not conform to his

¹ Read at the Mercer County District Medical Society October 10, 1893.



preconceived notions of what the conditions should be. This is unfortunate, and ultimately injures both the place and the advocate. The plain truth would be better for all.

To start with, absolute perfection of climatic conditions is not to be had anywhere. In the second place it must be borne in mind that tables of mean temperature and relative humidity are statistical records that may be juggled and made to show almost anything. Then again, there are dozens of other things that bear on the welfare and comfort of the health-seeker, and they should all be considered.

The belt of high table-land (a part of the summit plateau) extending along the eastern range of the Rocky Mountains, and in which Cheyenne, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Manitou may be found at the north, and Los Vegas, Trinidad, and Santa Fé farther south, is a favorite place for the assignment of cases of pulmonary tuberculosis.

The altitude varies from about five thousand feet to something over seven thousand feet. The air is invigorating, even stimulating. There are few days on which the sun does not shine, and the dryness is all that the greatest advocate of a dry climate could ask. During the summer months there is a moderate rainfall, but it comes in showers lasting a few hours only, and is followed by sunshine and blue sky. Gray and clouded skies, and day after day of rain such as the Atlantic seaboard is subject to, are unknown; and it is the proud boast of the people of this plateau that they have about three hundred days of sunshine in a year.

The advantages of this territory are then—the

altitude, dryness, abundance of sunshine, the peculiarly stimulating and invigorating qualities of the atmosphere, and, I would add, the purifying effects of the occasional high winds, which are so unpleasant while they last and which are so often cited as a great objection.

Other features that present themselves for consideration are the extremes of temperature between day and night and between one day and the next (winter or summer); the dust-storms or sand-storms; the pall of smoke that is inseparably connected with all large towns or cities where there are railroads or factories (for none but bituminous coal is used anywhere in the region considered).

Denver is a very smoky city and in the winter season sends a trail of black clouds for miles out over the prairie. Even Colorado Springs of a winter's morning is overhung and enveloped in its own smoke-product, and the view of it from the plains is far from ideal. I do not desire to convey the impression that these cities are dark and dingy, as are Pittsburg and Chicago—the free circulation of air would prevent that even if the smoke were much thicker. I am speaking of them as health-resorts, and of this condition as existing to an undesirable degree.

Colorado has an admirable winter climate, but from November 1st to March 1st it is not a tropical or semi-tropical climate by any means, and the patient who goes there then expecting to camp out, or wear his summer clothing, makes a great mistake. The nights are always cold—sometimes very cold—and the days are mostly bright, dry, and

beautiful, but often very cold also, so that warm winter clothing, and an abundance of it, is needed.

A Philadelphia lawyer was sent to Colorado Springs last fall by one of the ablest physicians of his city, and was told that he could live out of doors, hunt, fish, shoot, etc. Wrapped in his heaviest ulster, and pacing up and down the hotel piazza in the sun to try and keep warm, the man told me that if he had given a legal opinion with as little knowledge of the facts as that he would have been disbarred.

Catarrhal diseases of the respiratory tract are the common and prevailing ailments in Colorado, and new-comers are greatly annoyed for a time with dry nose and throat, induced by the passage of the very dry air over the mucous membrane. Adaptation to the new conditions soon takes place, however.

As to other conditions, it may be said that the society is good, and the people educated and affable to an unusual degree. There is plenty of interest to divert one; saddle-horses are abundant, cheap, and good; roads fair, and in some places excellent; food equal to that found anywhere; and stores well stocked for all one's needs, but with prices for board and merchandise about a fourth or sixth higher than in the East. The houses are well built, warm, and comfortable, with ample provision for heating; electric lights and railroads are in all large towns; and first-class transportation, with good dining-car service, is present all over the States and to the East.

For certain well-selected cases Colorado is admir-

ably adapted, but the medical men of the world make a mistake in fancying that all cases of pulmonary tuberculosis will do well in Colorado. Many tuberculous patients are hurried to the grave by a trip to Colorado. In some the disease is arrested for a time, to be accelerated later, while in others the arrest may be complete and permanent. Cases far advanced, very young patients with active disease—in fact, acute cases of tuberculosis do not do well here; indeed, they do not do well anywhere. The best results are had in slow non-febrile, and hemorrhagic cases of a subacute kind, in which there is an apparent effort to resist the disease, and when a degree of immunity may have been established. When valvular heart-lesions exist, or the kidneys are damaged, the patient should not go to Colorado.

Those who go and get the best results spend as much time out of doors as possible, and are guided as to exercise in that rarefied air by a good local medical adviser. Grave mistakes may be made if one yields to the stimulation of the rarefied air, and exercises violently. The effect of the air and altitude has been aptly spoken of as “champagny,” and patients must be cautioned to go slowly until they are acclimated.

The climate of Northern New Mexico, in the vicinity of Los Vegas and Santa Fé, is much like that of Colorado Springs. It is, perhaps, not so subject to sudden change, and on the whole is warmer. At Los Vegas there is a good hotel, where one may have all he requires, and Santa Fé is a very curious old town, full of interesting things.

In Southern New Mexico, Western Texas, and in

Arizona, all of the conditions are very different from those of Colorado. The elevation is less, the soil is different, the water is for the most part so alkaline as to be very distasteful and disturbing to those not accustomed to it. The rainfall is much less, and the dust is dreadful. The sun is hot, and one very soon feels the enervation and *ennui* of it all. In addition to all this, the hotels in Albuquerque, El Paso, Tucson, Phoenix, and Yuma are bad beyond endurance. The food is wretched, and the people one meets, with a few notable exceptions, are not attractive companions.

There has been a disposition of late, on the part of some Eastern consultants, to send tuberculous patients to this arid country ; but their ideas of it were not formed after seeing and carefully investigating its fitness for such cases, or none would be sent there by men of conscience.

A territory that offers no more in comfort, associations, entertainments, or natural advantages than this, and is by reason of its heat, dust, bad water, and poor domiciles so uncomfortable, and is in addition as unhygienic as the filthy habits of the native Mexican and Indian population can make it, is no place for a delicate Eastern invalid with a cultivated taste for many things that have become necessities of life, and that are here unattainable.

Acquired tuberculosis is very rare, almost unknown, in Colorado. The natives do not have it or acquire it from the many invalids about them. Children of tuberculous persons grow up free from it, intermarry, and rear children who do not acquire it. In Arizona the disease is common and fatal

among the native population—the Indians having it in a rapidly fatal form, like that which affects our negro ; it not rarely runs a course of only a few weeks or a month or two.

In my opinion, if there is any place on this earth where all the conditions combine to create a field where a tuberculous patient would not do well, that place is Arizona. And when I add to this the mournful tales of actual disappointment and disaster here, I am constrained to beg my co-laborers of the East to cut Arizona from the list, and save their patients trials and discomforts, and themselves remorse. The few cases reported as doing well in Arizona are of a type that would do well anywhere, if they were relieved of care and worry, and could lead an out-of-door life—cases not far advanced, with good resisting powers, and, above all, able to exercise out-of-doors enough to create an appetite that is not critical.

Southern California, in the vicinity of Los Angeles, Pasadena, Riverside, Santa Barbara, or San Bernardino, is a charming State ; and San Diego is quite as charming as any of the towns named, and claims a better climate in point of equability of temperature and greater dryness. This claim must be allowed. Here, again, certain invalids do well, for it is possible to be out of doors day after day, and, excepting in the rainy season, it is, any of it, dry enough.

The chief fault to be found with any of these points in Southern California is the same. One falls at once into the lassitude of the semi-tropical atmosphere, and suffers in body and mind from the consequent depression. The dust is bad in the dry season, and the heat of the sun is intense.

Pulmonary tuberculosis is a disease of house-builders, is contagious ; it starts in portions of the lungs least used, and its course is modified by the nutrition and nervous energy of the subject. To combat it, then, it is best to keep out of houses as much as possible (day and night); to avoid contact with tuberculous patients indoors; to "keep out of dust and out of crowds;" to fully expand the air-vesicles of every portion of the lungs many times a day, and best in a rarefied air; to maintain the nutrition by proper exercise and good food, and to remove the person from the cares and worries of business or household. Medicines may be auxiliary to this course, but can do little good when these means are ignored.

California has many conditions favorable to carrying out such treatment, and is no doubt well adapted to the needs of some cases.

Arizona and Western Texas have very unfavorable conditions, while Northern New Mexico, Colorado, and Southern Wyoming offer the very best to be found on this continent, if not on earth. The altitude, dryness, air-currents, sunshine, good-fellowship, and good living make these regions a Mecca to which a certain proportion of the tuberculous patients of the world may go and receive benefit, if they will but go early.

The opportunity is presented for the medical man of the East to exercise rare good judgment in the selection of cases to be sent to Colorado. If he waits till he has exhausted his pharmacopeial resources on a case, and at last sends the patient away to get him off his hands, he must expect no good to come of it. Grasp the situation early ; don't

temporize or procrastinate ; state the *true* condition of things fairly and honestly to the patient or his friends, and make your recommendation with the force and earnestness you would use with any other prescription, when once a painstaking conclusion is reached, and you will not be reproached or feel remorse.

I feel it my duty to add that I believe the curative effect of climate has been vastly overestimated by the great body of medical men, and that a properly directed out-of-door life—rain or shine—will do nearly as much for us under the same conditions of freedom from work and worry as the best climate on earth could do. Returning as I do after a year of health-chasing, to find many of my old patients or acquaintances who have had tuberculosis for years (some as long as thirty), as well, or better, than I left them ; to find others apparently well, or with greater improvement at least than I have made, is enough to set one to thinking.

I can recall many cases of the disease, well-advanced, with a history of hemorrhages, etc., that have entirely recovered in New Jersey ; and many men of this sort went to the front in 1861, endured all the privations of campaigning, and came home sound and robust, cured by the out-of-door life—some, I regret to say, only to die of a re-development of the disease after a few years of work in the store or office.

Another fallacy is that if one goes West and improves, he must stay there. The truth is, if one improves after a long out-of-door holiday in the West, he cannot expect to go back to his old work and environment, wherever situated, without risk. If

he comes back to continue (to a degree at least) the life led West he may hope for good health in the ratio of his approximation to his Western habits.

There are many places within a few hundred miles of New York where Nature is as undisturbed and the atmosphere as pure and free from dust and disease-germs as any that can be found west of the Mississippi. The Adirondacks in New York, the pine regions of New Jersey, or the wilds of Pike County, Pa., offer about all the advantages of Colorado, excepting extreme dryness and great elevation; and it is only under certain circumstances, and for certain well-selected cases, that these are necessary or desirable.

Patients who have not the strength or vitality to lead an out-of-door life in New Jersey will get little or no benefit in Colorado, and need not go to Arizona or California to find conditions no more favorable for their improvement than can be found in the Carolinas, Georgia, or Florida.

The rigors and vagaries of a Northern winter are as well avoided in the Southeast as in the Southwest; the feeble patient is nearer home and friends in case of severe illness or death; he avoids a long and exhausting railroad ride, and is free from the dust and unsanitary conditions of Arizona and the forsaken, far-away, friendless feeling so common in Southern California.

My advice about this whole matter is: keep out of doors, "out of dust and out of crowds;" for the favorable cases (with few exceptions) the place is less important than the kind of life followed; for the unfavorable ones, the nearer home and friends, the better.

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